

## **Edgefield County Council Chairman's Update April 5, 2013**

### **Council passes Land Development ordinance**

County Council passed a land development ordinance this week. As I have mentioned before, it will play an important role as our County develops.

The idea of a land development ordinance was birthed by the Edgefield County Strategic Plan. We held numerous meetings as part of the Strategic Plan to gather input on what the County needs to focus on for the next few years, and citizens liked the idea of a land development ordinance and how it could work.

I believe this ordinance should help protect property values, improve the way future development will look across every part of the County, and will have a positive impact on economic development. We still have other work to do, but this ordinance is a good start to enhancing growth in our County.

### **First Reading held on the Fiscal Year 2013-14 Budget**

At the County Council meeting on Tuesday, the Council gave first reading to next year's budget, which begins July 1, 2013. We also held a budget workshop in March to discuss the budget and to go through it page by page.

The \$8.8 million budget is only about \$251,000 higher than last year's budget. There is no tax increase. Some of the key parts of it include:

- A 2% increase in salaries for County employees, the first in two years;
- Providing money for two new deputies in the Sheriff's Department (We also provided funding for the Sheriff to hire two new deputies in this year's budget);
- A new ambulance, which will make the third the County has purchased in less than two years to update the aging fleet of ambulances;
- Providing money necessary to split two large voting precincts, Trenton and Merriwether;
- Taking the Emergency Management Director's position to a full-time job, as required by state law; and
- Money for lights for walkers at Bettis Park and work to be done at the Sweetwater Community Center.

There are many, many other items in this proposed budget, of course. I encourage you to go to the Edgefield County website to review it for yourself. I just wanted to give you some highlights.

The County Staff, Elected Officials and Department Heads did an excellent job of pointing out what items were really needed in a tight budget. I appreciate their dedication to the County by looking for ways to save money and hold off on some purchases.

To balance the budget, we have had to add approximately \$343,000 from our reserves. I want to point out that even doing that, we are left with 3.8 months of reserves left, a solid number. Also, for the past five years, the County has either spent less than the reserves needed or has actually returned money to

the budget instead of spending any of the reserves that had been budgeted. So, I'm comfortable with where our budget is.

However, it is still a very lean budget, and we are not yet where we need to be as a County. We have put multiple cost-savings measures into place the past two years that are starting to pay dividends. We have more cost-savings initiatives planned, and I look forward to our budget situation continuing to get better.

### **Upcoming items of interest**

In the next few months, you will hear the Council begin talking more about how to fund parts of our Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). (If you want to know more about the CIP, please go to the County's website to read what we passed last year.)

Also, within the next several months, I expect us to discuss where to locate the proposed animal shelter.

Also in the near future, you'll hear us discuss other items, such as another potential Highway Overlay District, a countywide summit, rails to trails work, and other topics to respond to citizen needs and to improve our County.

Until next time,

Dean Campbell

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### **How This Update Works**

As Chairman of Edgefield County Council, I use this newsletter to help explain County issues and try to answer questions from citizens. We will protect the email addresses of those who are interested in receiving this newsletter.

I'd like to send this newsletter to you at least monthly, depending on issues upcoming or ongoing, or if issues need more explanation.

Finally, if you have a question about an issue, please reply to me. I'll be happy to try to answer your question.